

DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

# **CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91125

Daughters, Dollars, and Domesticity:  
Family Wages and Female Autonomy in American Textiles,  
Evidence from the Federal Survey of 1908

Douglas Flammig



**HUMANITIES WORKING PAPER 153**

September 1992



**Daughters, Dollars, and Domesticity:  
Family Wages and Female Autonomy in American Textiles,  
Evidence from the Federal Survey of 1908**

The old notion that industrialization jackhammered the traditional family into atomistic pieces--that industrial capitalism was incompatible with preindustrial household relationships--has now virtually been abandoned by historians. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the family, as an institution, proved remarkably resilient and flexible in dealing with the economic changes that transformed America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, not only did the traditional family survive smokestack America, it also served as a fundamental component of labor mobilization. The family proved central to the processes of labor migration and work force participation, even as it facilitated the persistence of older cultural norms in the industrial setting.<sup>1</sup>

Yet it is difficult to believe that industrialization did not infuse working-class households with new and unsettling tensions, particularly between parents and their wage-earning daughters. As more "working girls" entered America's factories and became essential contributors to the family wage economy, many working-class households faced the matter of a daughter's wages. Would the daughter get to keep the wages she earned or would she give them to her parents? Who decided? Did a young woman's contribution to the family coffer earn her a greater degree of personal autonomy? If parents were dependent on their daughters' wages, could those daughters bargain for greater control over their own affairs?

For working-class households in the early twentieth century, these questions went to the heart of parental authority and the meaning of accumulation. For most Americans prior to the late nineteenth century, making a living involved farm work or crafts mixed with domestic industry; the survival strategies for these households amounted to a family *production* economy. But the rise of large-scale industry and town-based manufacturing prompted the creation of the family *wage* economy, which was based on the cumulative earnings family members brought home from wage labor outside the home. The difference was not trivial in the least. Traditional productive behaviors, even if altered by a commercial orientation or by increased poverty and dependence, placed little strain on economic relationships within the household; that is, parental

power was based squarely on productive power. Not so in a family wage economy, in which the wages brought home by children could, and often did, outweigh that of a working father or mother. For poor households, the economic center could shift quite rapidly, and such a transfer could not easily occur without a corresponding renegotiation in basic family relationships.

For scholars interested in the relationship between industrialization and gender the issue of working girls and wages raises a much larger question: did industrialization, by promoting economic autonomy among working girls, create greater possibilities for individual freedom for women? The historian Edward Shorter launched the debate nearly two decades ago when he charted the rise of female "emancipation" in Europe from the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth. He argued that women's "involvement in the economy of the market place [was] the principal motor of emancipation." In his view, "Industrial growth fragmented the customary 'family economy' by making individual producers of its separate members. And, for the children, at least, independence accompanied wage labor." Independence in the economic marketplace meant less domination by parents and therefore a type of free agency in marriage and family markets, all of which diminished female subordination to husbands and led to a subsequent decline in birth rates.<sup>2</sup>

Recently, scholars from a variety of disciplines have addressed this issue, directly and indirectly. Economists have examined changing family survival strategies, pointed toward the importance of working girls to industrial growth, and attempted to model the shift from cooperative familism to market-oriented individualism among young women workers. Demographers and family historians have questioned how the changes in women's work affected the family life course and basic patterns of marriage and fertility. Labor historians have reexamined the role of wage-earning women in the working-class community and have analyzed whether the presence of working girls in the labor force facilitated or hindered worker solidarity and resistance to managerial discipline. All of these studies intersect with a growing body of literature by historians of labor and gender that considers whether factory work held different meanings and consequences for females. Can we trace women's independence, empowerment, and sisterhood (or the lack thereof) to the emergence of female wage work in the industrial revolution? Did gainful employment in the capitalist labor market emancipate young women from traditional roles, or did it serve to strengthen customary roles within the changing economic system?<sup>3</sup>

Some recent works seem to side with Shorter. Sara Evans's synthesis of American women's history, for example, argues that young single women at the turn of the century, being "relatively economically autonomous and freed either by work or school from intense familial supervision . . . began to appropriate a more individualistic ethos for themselves." Social experimentation then

provided important new outlets for female self expression, but, Evans notes, when working-class women "found mates they withdrew again into the family circle and a life with little space for leisure or pleasure."<sup>4</sup>

This apparent bifurcation of working-class womanhood--from a childhood of emergent independence to an adulthood of domestic tradition--is a recurrent theme in several recent works, including two books on working women in New York city. Christine Stansell, focusing on the antebellum period, argues that "wage earning in the industrial city . . . put considerable strain on corporate family forms, especially in the case of young women. Daughters worked to help their families, but they also used their wages to distance themselves from parental authority." This independence normally took the form of social, often sexual, amusements, which middle class reformers and many working-class parents viewed with considerable angst. Though fleeting, limited, and sometimes self-destructive, such personal independence, Stansell argues, offered the possibility of a larger "political vision of women's freedom" and created "unforeseen possibilities" for poor working women.<sup>5</sup> Kathy Peiss's study of female working-class leisure during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century illuminates a similar demand for social autonomy, with much the same consequences for young women. In the dance halls and amusement parks of the teeming city, "young working women had defined a style that in some ways subverted the traditional bases of their dependency--as dutiful daughters in the patriarchal immigrant family and as submissive workers in a capitalist economy." Yet ultimately Peiss's women confronted the limits of social liberation, which, however much it enhanced individual self expression, failed to alter the basic social structure that rendered poor women sexually vulnerable and economically dependent. Socially daring peer-group adventures only briefly forestalled, and did not alter, the drudgery and hardship of marriage and motherhood that lay ahead for most working girls.<sup>6</sup>

Leslie Woodcock Tentler's analysis of working women and household relationships in the early twentieth century argues that the factory experience exerted a strong conservative influence on young women. Placing women's work within the family life-cycle, Tentler focuses on young women's lives during the critical period between school and marriage, during which working-class daughters invariably worked for wages outside the home. Rather than liberating young women from traditional dependencies and ideas, Tentler argues, factory work only reinforced their "domestic destiny." The "strong and controlling bonds of obligation and loyalty" that held working class families together "were especially strong for daughters . . . [for whom] wage earning was an essentially domestic obligation." Whatever examples of familial tensions were evident, working girls remained intensely loyal to their parents in all things. "Neither the emotional nor the economic realities of working-class life," Tentler argues, "prepared them to assume a role independent of this loyalty." Poor wages, poor work conditions, poor chances for advancement--

all justified by the notion that young women were temporary workers (which became a self-fulfilling prophecy)--encouraged female workers to opt for the relative security and well-being of motherhood. Coming of age as essential wage earners in working-class families, young women continued their working lives as mothers and economic managers, working for wages outside the home only when the exigencies of poverty and family crisis demanded it. From domestic obligations as a daughter to domestic obligations as a wife: that was the pattern of life for most working-class women.<sup>7</sup>

All of these studies suggest, implicitly or explicitly, that the wages a daughter earned were pivotal to the internal dynamics of working-class families. As yet, however, historians have shown more interest in the social behavior of working daughters than in the nitty-gritty of wage bargaining within the home. It is widely held that, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, single children working for wages and still living at home contributed some, if not all, of their earnings to the family. But we actually know very little about how much money wage-earning daughters typically got to keep, or what factors determined who was able to keep something. The economic bargains that were struck between working-girls and their parents have received little empirical analysis.

This essay attempts to redress this imbalance by analyzing data on wage-earning daughters who were working in the American textile industry in the early twentieth century, were sixteen years or older, and were still living at home with their parents. The data is taken from a massive report undertaken by the Bureau of Labor in 1907-8. We will examine the amount of earnings these cotton-mill women were able to keep for themselves, as well as the various influences--individual and familial--that were related to wage-keeping. Equally important, this article explores the role that region played in shaping family-wage negotiations and gender relations. New England and the South dominated American textiles, but the two regions were very different, culturally and economically. Did young women in the New England states, a more modern environment than the newly industrializing South, keep more wages and experience greater economic autonomy than their peers in Dixie, a region known for its devotion to patriarchy and familial tradition?

### **The Economic Context and the Data**

By 1900, the American textile industry had been a dominant part of the national economy for more than eighty years. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, large-scale textile manufacturing had taken off in New England, a regional development that sprang partly from some timely technological smuggling from Great Britain, the world textile leader at the time, from

the disruption of trade during the War of 1812, and from a growing surplus of child and female labor in rural New England. This last factor was particularly critical, for it was cheap labor that initially distinguished the industry, and it was the absence of cheap labor in the antebellum South that initially shut Dixie out of large-scale textile manufacturing. Only in the postbellum era, with the commercial reorientation of the southern countryside and the subsequent economic dislocation of so many farm families, did the South experience its own industrial take off. Not surprisingly, the South's foremost industry was textiles, which did not require a highly skilled work force or large capital outlays. In both regions, cheap labor was often synonymous with female labor, and by the early twentieth century, cotton textiles employed by far the largest number of women workers of any industry, North and South. In 1905, more than one in ten of all wage-earning women in the United States was working in a cotton mill.<sup>8</sup>

The regional differences separating northern mills from southern mills were marked as the new century dawned. Most mills in New England were well established and produced high-grade cloth; they were generally located in or near major urban areas and were larger than most mills in the South. In Dixie, most mills were still relatively new, having been built during the take-off period of the 1880s and 1890s, with many new mills popping up on the outskirts of small towns throughout the southern Piedmont. The principal product, coarse textile cloth, was appropriate to a region that had no heritage of industrial skill upon which to draw. The central difference between northern and southern mills was their labor supply. Since the late 1840s, New England textiles had relied on successive waves of immigrant labor: the Irish and Germans before the Civil War; the French Canadians, who came after and were still the dominate group in the early twentieth century; and, beginning in the 1890s, the Poles, Portuguese, Italians and others from southern and eastern Europe. Virtually none of these immigrants or their children made their way to the South, where millhands were almost all white, native-born southerners of southern-born parents. There was no labor exchange between the two sections. Cotton mills North and South operated within a nationally integrated economy, but their labor markets were completely isolated and regionally distinctive.<sup>9</sup>

Two important characteristics of the American textile industry crossed regional lines. First, in both regions, textile work was low-wage factory work. Northern wage scales in textiles far exceeded those in the South, the nation's poorest section; but within New England's more diverse industrial economy, textile wages were relatively low. Second, family labor systems were the rule in both regions. It was just as common in Fall River, Massachusetts, as in Greensboro, South Carolina, to find several household members working in the same mill, with plenty of other kin along side. Very young children, below the age of 14, were more likely to be working in

Dixie than in New England, due to child-labor statutes in the North, but the overall pattern of family labor was everywhere apparent in the cotton mills.<sup>10</sup>

Because the textile industry employed so many children and young women, it became the focus of considerable concern and criticism during the progressive-era, as reformers rallied around the issues of child labor and female labor. By about 1905, these concerns had bubbled up to the U.S. Senate, which subsequently commissioned the Bureau of Labor to undertake a massive fact-finding investigation. The result was the 19 volume *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States*, published in 1910. The data on the cotton textile industry was gathered by federal agents in late 1907 and early 1908. Information was gathered in all the leading textile states and some minor ones in New England and the South.

Here I analyze data from three New England states--Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island--which led that region's textile production, and from the three leading southern states--North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Federal agents claimed to have collected the data systematically, taking samples from a variety of mills-- urban, small-town, and rural; large, medium, and small-- in accordance to the distribution of the textile industry in each particular state. The New England sample consisted of 928 female employees, the southern sample of 1001.

The federal data is rich in information for each working girl and her family. Facts about each woman's job and her earnings during a "normal" pay period were obtained from company payrolls. Other information was gathered from an interview with the working-daughter and her family. Some of the data reflected the woman's own personal attributes--age, years experience on the job, literacy, annual earnings--while other offered details regarding the household that woman lived in--such as the number of children in the home and their ages, the annual family earnings, the occupation of the father, and whether the mother worked for wages outside the home.<sup>11</sup>

The amount of wages that each working-girl personally retained for herself must be estimated, as that figure was not gathered by federal investigators. The data includes an estimate of each woman's annual earnings ( $I$ ), the total annual earnings of all children in the family who were sixteen years of age or older ( $C$ ), and the total amount those older children got to keep for themselves ( $K$ ).<sup>12</sup> To estimate the earnings that each working-girl personally retained, I assumed that a woman's take from  $K$  reflected the extent of her contribution to  $C$ . So, if her annual earnings amounted to 50 percent of  $C$ , I assumed that she received 50 percent of  $K$ . The result is the variable *Share*, which indicates in dollars the amount of a mill girl's annual earnings she retained for herself.



Except for a few cases in which the working girl was the only child in her family over sixteen, *Share* is an estimate. One potential bias in the estimate stems from the fact that we do not know the gender of the other older children in the household. The Senate report stated that male children in both regions were more likely to keep their earnings than female children--that fact itself an important indication of gender roles. If this statement was accurate, the variable *Share* may be inflated for those women in the sample with large numbers of older brothers.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, brothers and older sisters of cotton mill girls were sometimes engaged in work that did not bring in steady wages or any wages at all (day labor and farm labor for brothers; housekeeping for sisters), in which case the working girl's earnings far exceeded her siblings, the result being that *Share* might be underestimated. Since the two potential biases push in opposite directions, the estimation errors may well cancel out. In any event, as shall be seen, the vast majority of children over sixteen kept none of their wages, and "zero," in this case, is a figure unencumbered by estimating procedures.

Before analyzing the data, some assumptions and qualifications ought to be stated explicitly. First, I assume that the allocation of a daughter's wages (i.e., the determination of who got command of those wages once the woman brought them home) was determined by a bargaining process within the family. The extent to which this was a conscious process is unknown. In some instances arguments between parents and their daughters, or even between parents, may have raged before a bargain was struck. And some daughters who wanted to keep some money for themselves but got to keep none might have said there was not much bargaining to it--that the loss of their wages was a simple matter of parental authoritarianism. In other households, working girls may have given over their entire earnings without hesitation or deliberation, as if it were the natural thing to do. If older siblings had been through the process before, a young girl doubtless entered a bargaining arena that was already shaped by prior agreements. The data cannot tease out such subtleties, but if we take a broad definition of "bargaining," one that includes wage allocations in which daughters had little say (due to previous arrangements or clearly understood notions of parental dominance), we can assume that, at some level, the amount of a working girl's wages she got to keep resulted from a process of negotiation.

That such bargains were in fact being negotiated was evident to the federal investigators, who found that southern working girls, by virtue of their contribution to the family income, were granted some special privileges. "Nearly always," the report noted, the child's pay envelope "is turned over to the parent unopened. There is no question as to this--it is taken as a matter of course." The report did not consider whether the parent then redistributed some of those wages to the children, but it did point to a socially visible bargain: "It is true, however, that the child at

work in the mill has a certain economic independence in the family not accorded to the children not earning wages. . . . The little girl is not so often asked to "mind the baby" or to wash the dishes. These duties usually devolve upon the oldest schoolgirl, who, in consequence, develops a strong desire to enter the mill as soon as she can."<sup>14</sup>

The second assumption is that a woman's ability to keep her wages was a reflection of economic independence. A corollary to this point is that the degree to which a working girl enjoyed such autonomy was indicated by the proportion of her earnings she kept. In an empirical sense, a woman who kept 80 percent of her wages had more economic independence than one who kept 30 percent; and both may be said to have more personal autonomy than women who gave all of their earnings to parents. Of course, there was much more to female autonomy than wages, but retaining wages for personal use would have been a new departure for daughters and it provides us with a clear means by which to gauge the extent of the change. True, a working girl's ability to retain her wages did not necessarily affect a long-term change in gender roles. Keeping wages did not, by itself, weaken a girl's bonds to her family. Young women who kept their wages sometimes spent the money on younger siblings. For example, Patricia Lowrance, who grew up in a Georgia mill village during the 1930s, recalled that "when a girl earned her first paycheck in the mill, it was customary for her to buy all her younger sisters a new pair of shoes, or a new dress, which they otherwise couldn't have had."<sup>15</sup> There is no reason to suspect this was not also the case for an earlier generation. Having command of one's own wages, in other words, did not necessarily entail a break from cultural norms. And even if a working woman were able to keep all of her earnings, it would not have been enough for her to be a woman of independent means. Still, keeping wages was no trivial matter for a young woman, even for those who spent their money on family. Choosing to purchase something for siblings or parents was, after all, an independent economic decision made by the working-woman herself.

## The Results

Most mill-working women in 1908 never made independent economic decisions, because most of them never retained any of their earnings for personal use. Out of a sample of 1,929 wage-earning daughters, 70.5 percent kept *none* of their annual earnings. Only 29.6 percent laid claim to some of the money from their own paycheck, and these young women, on average, kept only 33.5 percent of their earnings. These results alone offer a simple and powerful refutation of Shorter's thesis, but there is far more to the story.

One might well assume that these national figures masked significant regional differences, and that young working women were more likely to keep some of their earnings if they lived in New England. According to many contemporary observers and latter-day historians, the South's poor white mill workers were singularly committed to a conventional, patriarchal social order, in which wives were submissive to husbands, and children, especially daughters, were subservient to parents. Moreover, nothing in turn-of-the-century southern society--poor and economically underdeveloped as it was--seemed to impinge on customary lines of familial authority. In the New England states, by contrast, signs of modernity were everywhere to be seen. Rapid urban growth, a diverse and burgeoning economy, a heterogeneous population overflowing with recently arrived immigrants, more opportunities for working women, a stronger commitment to education: these were emblematic of a dynamic region in which the rules of social custom were in flux. Table 1 highlights some distinctions between cotton mill girls in New England and the South. Although essentially the same age as their southern peers, northern women earned more money, were better educated, were more likely to have mothers working for wages outside the home (a high of 10.1 percent in Massachusetts), and were more likely to have been raised in an urban environment than on a farm. They worked in the area that, by every reasonable index, offered the possibility of greater personal autonomy.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 2 demonstrates, among other things, how little we know about the process of modernization. It also suggests that we pay closer attention to interregional variation in our historical analysis of women, labor, and culture. Contrary to all expectation, wage-earning daughters in the economically backward and (supposedly) culturally impervious South were far *more likely* to keep some of their annual earnings than New England's cotton mill girls. Nearly 40 percent of Dixie's working women retained control of at least a portion of their cotton-mill

earnings; only one in five northern women did so, a difference loaded with statistical significance, as indicated by the high chi-square statistic.

[Table 2 about here]

The state-level variations on wage-keeping presented in Table 3 reinforce the regional statistics. In no New England state did the percentage of wage keepers exceed that of any southern state. Maine, with the best record of wage retention among northern states, stood four percentage points below Georgia, which had the worst record among southern states. The 27 percentage-point difference between North Carolina and Massachusetts highlights these surprising trends. Massachusetts, the most diverse, urban, and culturally malleable state, was also the only state in which the proportion of women who kept some of their wages fell below 20 percent. Then consider North Carolina: most mill girls there lived in small-towns or company own-mill villages; virtually everyone who worked in the mills was a native-born southerner of southern-born parents; average annual earnings for cotton mill girls and for cotton mill families were the lowest of all six states; 89 percent of the mothers of mill girls were housewives (and those who were not were more likely to be dead than working for wages outside the home); the rate of illiteracy among mill girls was highest of any textile state, exceeding 25 percent. Yet it was in North Carolina that wage earning daughters were most likely to control some of their paycheck.

[Table 3 about here]

Region, then, seems to have made a critical difference, but 20 percent of the wage-earning daughters in New England also got to keep something, which raises the question of what factors, nationwide, were related to wage-keeping. Why did a minority of young women succeed in retaining wages? Was their success a function of age, whereby older daughters were more likely to keep some wages? Or was it due to their earning capabilities, their job skills, or their levels of education? If they kept wages for these reasons, it might well be argued that a working-girl's individual traits did in fact contribute to her economic independence and that, to some degree at least, factory work served to amplify her personal autonomy. On the other hand, a woman's ability to control her wages might have had more to do with family matters than with her own individual characteristics. Did a working girl's power to retain her earnings stem from family size or the number of younger siblings in the household? For example, a woman in a household filled with older wage-earning children might be more likely to keep her wages than one who was the only wage-earner in a family filled with very young children. Perhaps, too, the difference was linked to whether she came from a single-parent household, or to the household head's occupation. If family circumstances were the central determinate in wage-keeping calculations, then it could hardly be argued that a woman's ability to retain her earnings was in any way emancipative. If a woman's place in her family, and the peculiar composition of that

family, were major factors in the process, then keeping wages (from the perspective of the individual working girl) was principally a matter of chance, not individual agency.

To examine these questions I have employed a logit model using the dichotomous measure *Keepers* as my dependent variable (*Keepers* = 1 if woman kept some wages, 0 otherwise) and a variety of individual and familial characteristics as my independent variables.<sup>16</sup> The independent variables are defined at the bottom of Table 4. The first three variables (*A*, *I*, *W*) measure personal traits: age, earnings power, and skill level. It was assumed that all three would be positively related to wage keeping.<sup>17</sup> The variable for annual Family earnings (*F*) was expected to be positively related to *Keepers*, the idea being that the larger the family coffer, the less pressure on a working daughter to relinquish all of her paycheck. Younger siblings (*Y*) and Older siblings (*O*), both being indicators of family structure, were expected to work in opposite directions: *Y* would force a greater financial burden on older daughters, while *O* would enhance one's chances of keeping some wages. Daughters from single-parent households (*S*) were assumed to be less likely to be keepers, since, other things being equal, they would shoulder greater financial burdens for the household. Daughters with mothers working outside the home for wages (*M*), a variable surprisingly unrelated to *S*, was assumed to have a positive relationship to *Keepers*.<sup>18</sup> Having a father who worked in the textile industry (*D*) was assumed to have a negative relationship on southerners, where notions of patriarchal dominance were purportedly so strong, and an uncertain relationship on northern women.

Table 4 shows, first of all, the basic model run separately for the two regions, the results of which are curiously at odds. For southern women, *O* was positively and significantly related to keeping wages, but for northern women, *O* had no measurable effect.<sup>19</sup> In New England, the variable *I* was significant but also, strangely, negative: the more a northern mill daughter earned, the less likely she was to keep any of the money she brought home. So much for individual incentive. Two other family variables, *F* and *Y*, were significantly related (in the expected directions) to wage-keeping for northern women. For southerners, however, neither *I* nor *F* nor *Y* were significant determinants of wage-keeping. Only *D* was significant in both regional models, and yet the relationship ran in opposite directions in the two regions. Having a textile-worker father in Dixie, contrary to expectation, was positively related to keeping one's earnings. In New England, wage-earning daughters whose fathers worked in the textile industry could basically expect to give away all of their earnings.

[Table 4 about here]

A national-level model that takes region into consideration can be derived by using the entire data set and adding a dummy variable for southerners. The regional dummy (*R*) indeed

showed that mill girls in Dixie were more apt to control part of their paychecks. With region accounted for in this model, variables *F*, *Y*, and *O* all proved significantly related to wage-retention, and all with the expected sign. Variable *I*, which acted strangely in the previous New England model, lost its significance here, perhaps not surprisingly. More curious, though, was *D*'s fall into insignificance, which resulted from the fact that dummy variable *R* accounts for differences in the intercept but it cannot account for divergent slopes. *D* slopes upward for southerners and down for those in New England, the result being that *D*, in the national model, appears to cancel out. Using bifurcated dummies for *D*, as in the final model presented here, clarifies this point. Here, *R* easily retains its significance, and the divergent realities for northerners with textile fathers (*ND*) and their southern counterparts (*SD*) are clearly indicated. This alteration in the model teases out a key regional difference without changing the other observed relationships.

There are several stories here. First, in regard to the question of industrial work and female independence, Shorter's view cannot stand. Wage-earning daughters who successfully bargained for a share of their paycheck were not distinguished by maturity or talent on the job.<sup>20</sup> Instead, family circumstances made the difference. Daughters whose families, as a whole, earned more money annually had more bargaining power, as did those who had large numbers of older siblings and few younger ones. A father's occupation mattered, as did the region in which one lived. In all, individual traits--skill, hard work, experience--did not count for much when it came to keeping one's wages. The factors that determined whether a mill girl retained some of her paycheck were beyond her control. There is no evidence that the system rewarded female initiative or sparked notions of female emancipation from familial control.

And then there is the story of region. There is no simple explanation for something as counterintuitive as the southern advantage. Part of the answer, too, is hidden by multicollinearity: the split between regions might well fall along the lines nativity or religion, but the data will not allow for such exploration. The vast majority of northern women had foreign-born fathers and were from Catholic cultures (Irish, French Canadian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese), while virtually all southern women had native-born fathers and were reared in a culture imbued with evangelical Protestantism.<sup>21</sup> *R*, therefore, could reflect southern-ness, white Protestant culture, American nativity, or some combination of all three. Perhaps native-born parents, even poor-white southern parents, were more accustomed than immigrant parents to thinking of their children as individuals in the free economic market. Perhaps the democratic autonomy of southern Protestant churches created an environment of autonomy within the household that was less prevalent among Catholic families. Other cultural explanations are plausible. Perhaps parents in Dixie's mill

villages were willing to entrust daughters with wages precisely because their cotton mill world was pervasively homogenous and culturally predictable. Or perhaps southern daughters had simply learned to bargain more effectively than their New England counterparts.

Then there is the matter of textile-worker fathers. The divergent signs for *ND* and *SD* suggest that the regional trends may have been more structural than cultural. It is difficult, however, to determine what that structural component might have been. The proportion of textile-worker fathers was similar in both regions: 30 percent in New England; 27 percent in the South. In both North and South, wage-earning daughters and families with cotton-mill fathers earned more money, on average, than those whose fathers were not in textiles. In both regions, individual daughters of textile-worker fathers brought home 23 percent of total family income. One structural difference regards the comparative contributions of older children, in aggregate, to the family economy: in the South, children sixteen and over earned 56 percent of the household income; in New England, they earned 67 percent. In short, northern mill girls were more critical to their families' economic welfare than southern mill girls were. This fact offers a structural explanation for the overall regional discrepancy in wage-keeping. It does not, however, explain why *ND* and *SD* took different signs, because children of textile fathers contributed 10 percent less to the family economy than other children *in both regions*.

The answer to this conundrum may lie in the dissimilar manufacturing bases and levels of industrial development in the two regions. In Dixie, poor white fathers had very few wage-earning options available to them other than cotton mill labor. Southern textile wages were pitifully low on a national scale, but from a regional perspective, cotton mill work was one of the few steady factory jobs a poor, unskilled white man could have in the South in 1908. Northern textiles paid higher wages than the southern mills, but New Englanders viewed cotton mills from the vantage point of an economy comparatively rich in wage-earning opportunities. Foreign-born workers and their children--recent immigrants hungry for work--filled northern mills because they were willing to toil for some of the lowest factory wages in New England. One recent history of Lawrence, Massachusetts, notes that by the late 1910s, older workers had come to view textiles as synonymous with desperate immigrant labor and had come to view cotton mill work as being "beneath the native born."<sup>22</sup> It is difficult to speak of southern mill workers, frequently scorned as the nation's lowest industrial workers, as having greater status and economic stability than New England textile workers, but perhaps, in a comparative sense, they did. And perhaps this provides a clue as to why daughters with cotton-mill fathers in Dixie had more success retaining some wages, and why those in New England had less success than their northern peers.

Expanding the logit model for New England reinforces the importance of nativity in keeping wages. The two logit models in Table 5 add to the basic model a different dummy variable: In model "A," variable *F* distinguishes daughters of native-born and foreign-born fathers; in model "B," the dummy *NI* distinguishes women from newer immigrant groups (eastern and southern Europeans) from those of more established groups. The result for *NI* reveals that women from the newer immigrant groups (Poles, Portuguese, Italians) were not less likely to keep than those from older immigrant groups; but it should be said that the measurement for *NI* was somewhat unrefined, because French Canadians, although generally an older immigrant cohort, were still sending new recruits to the mills. Given the available data, *N* provides the best means of distinguishing between different groups of New Englanders, and the results of model "A" further confirm what was indirectly suggested by the dummy variable for southern women in table 4: daughters of native-born fathers were more likely to keep than daughters of foreign-born fathers. In virtually all of the literature on southern textile workers, Dixie's white working class is assumed to be more culturally conservative than northern workers. Future analyses in both regions should pay more attention to interregional differences and, given the result for *N* in table 5, more attention to native-born, foreign-born discrepancies.<sup>23</sup>

[Table 5 about here]

In both regions, family circumstances, not individual characteristics, determined who got to keep some of their cotton-mill earnings, which meant that mill wages were hardly liberating for working-class daughters. But the problem can be explored further by asking a separate question: among those who retained a portion of their earnings, who got to keep more? This question can be answered by means of a standard ordinary least-squares regression (OLS) limited to "keepers" only. The basic OLS model in Tables 6 and 7 is a condensed version of the earlier, fuller logit model.<sup>24</sup> The approach here is basically the same. The dependent variable is *share*, defined as the estimated dollar amount each woman was able keep from her annual earnings. The collection of independent variables includes three individual characteristics and several family variables (including various uses of a textile-father dummy: *D*, *ND*, and *SD*), as well as dummies for region and nativity, all used here as in the logit models.

The regression results for nation and region, presented in Table 6, add a new dimension to the wage-keeping story. The national model shows the enduring importance of household circumstances in shaping the dynamics of the wage-keeping bargain. And once again, southern women, especially those with fathers in textiles, had the advantage. But in these regressions, unlike in the logit models, individual characteristics did matter. Among those mill girls who got to keep something, older daughters who had greater personal earnings capabilities were likely to



control more money. As indicated by the coefficients for  $I$  and  $F$ , a woman's personal earnings were considerably more important than her family's overall income in determining how much money she kept for herself. Household and regional circumstances were the principal factors that separated the keepers from the nonkeepers, but for the minority of women who were in a position to keep something, individual job skills paid.

[Table 6 about here]

As the two regional models in Table 6 show, the dynamics of wage-keeping in Dixie and New England were largely dissimilar. In the southern model, the results for  $I$  and  $F$  followed the national pattern and indicated the relative importance of individual wage-earning ability, but it is equally clear that family circumstances once again predominated (collectively at least) as the factors that shaped wage-bargaining outcomes. The results for New England, however, highlight individual traits,  $A$  and  $I$ ; unlike in the South, family circumstances were inconsequential. It is instructive, though, that the dummy variable  $N$  shows a positive and significant relationship between native-born fathers and daughters who kept more of their paychecks, indicating once again that working women of immigrant fathers were at a comparative disadvantage in bargaining for control of their earnings.

The state-level regressions presented in Table 7 take the analysis one final step and confirm two important points. First, for those who managed to keep some of their earnings, individual earning-power was the most consistent factor, from state to state, in allowing a daughter to keep a larger share. Perhaps this process of individual advancement was the sort of emancipative autonomy that Shorter had in mind. The irony is that getting to the point of keeping some wages in the first place had nothing to do with individual ambition or skill or even age. Some daughters who found themselves in a good bargaining situation appeared to have made the most of their good fortune--they made more and kept more; but they had no observable influence in creating that positive bargaining environment. Whether they kept something in the first place was, according to the data at hand, beyond their control.

[Table 7 about here]

Second, the results in Table 7 reflect the divergent experiences of working women in the various states. Variables  $A$ ,  $W$ , and  $D$  are significant in only a single state each;  $F$  is significant in only two of six states. Even within regions, the factors that determined who kept more were surprisingly at odds. The point is not trivial. So much of women's history relies on general notions of gendered relationships, and so much of labor history relies on notions of "class" experience, both of which are generally assumed to have been universally felt by all women and all workers, and, in this case, by all working-class women. If differences are said to exist, they

are said to exist along racial or ethnic lines, or perhaps regional lines, but the numbers here suggest a more complex reality. Examining the coefficients in Table 7, for example, young working women in North Carolina seem to have encountered a different wage-bargaining environment than their fellow cotton mill girls in neighboring South Carolina, even though, on the surface, these women and their family circumstances were virtually identical. It is therefore difficult to see how "southern" working women could have forged a collective regional consciousness that embodied universally understood notions of class or gender. How much harder, then, for "American" working women to forge a national consciousness?

But perhaps it is too much to ask for a national or even regional consciousness. The original question was not about consciousness but experience, about whether industrial labor had a liberating effect on working-class daughters. The basic answer seems to be no. The data strongly suggests that female earnings were seen almost exclusively as part of the family economy. The wages a daughter brought home, and the determinants of how that money was allocated, only enhanced, rather than challenged, the basic dynamics of working-class domesticity. On the surface, the surprising results for the South add further support for continuity. In a region so devoted to traditional gender roles, how could wage-keeping have been so much more prevalent than in New England? One answer is that wage-keeping in the South was more widely accepted because it did nothing to threaten social conventions.

Such a conclusion is difficult to accept enthusiastically, however. Were young adult mill women in Dixie--the 39 percent of those who kept some of their wages--truly unaffected by their wage-keeping experiences? Perhaps not. Although evidence is scattered and anecdotal, by the late 1920s there seemed to have emerged a generation of southern mill girls who were more daring and unconventional than their forbearers. Certainly they were more devoted to consumerism, to fashion, and to the subtle power of petty social deviance. In scattered mill towns across the South, female cotton millers could be seen dressing like flappers, defying parental demands, precipitating strikes, and flaunting their sexuality in the face of male authorities. Notions of southern womanhood by no means changed overnight, but, by the time of the Great Depression, regional customs, even matters of gender, had changed in noticeable ways.<sup>25</sup> The reasons for these changes were many, including trends in national culture, but one factor that has heretofore been overlooked is the influence of the mothers. After all, the mothers of the 1920s mill girls were, in large part, the generation of southern mill girls who were surveyed in 1908, the ones who had been twice as likely as northern girls to keep some of their factory earnings. Apparently those working girls from the 1908 sample did leave home only to marry and tend to another home. But maybe they also raised daughters who had an eye toward expanding, however slightly, the social and economic opportunities for women in Dixie. At least one mill-working man in Georgia

noticed the changes and responded. In the 1920s he took an unprecedented step. As his daughter recalled, "one thing Daddy demanded was that each one of his boys take cooking lessons as much as the girls. . . . He said 'you'll get married and you can't ever tell--there's nothing that says your wife's going to be able at all times to cook and to take care of things.'"<sup>26</sup>

By the end of World War II the family-wage economy, as it existed in first decade of the century, had virtually disappeared. The change had occurred gradually and owed itself to the maturation of the work force, the decline in child labor, and the codification of those trends in New Deal labor legislation. By the end of the 1940s, school age children would, by and large, be in school, and those who worked part time (or those who dropped out and worked full time) would not hand over their unopened paychecks to their parents. It is testimony to the enduring impact of the Depression and World War II on the national economy and social structure that the subject of keeping one's wages, something of such importance to federal investigators in the first decade of the century, would now be taken for granted by parents and children alike. Today, single working women in the United States, even working-class women, have far greater freedom to shape their economic destinies than wage-earning daughters did eighty years ago. It does not necessarily follow that such freedom is emancipation enough.

**Table 1. "Cotton Mill Girls": Comparisons Between New England and the South**

	<u>New England</u>	<u>South</u>
Average Age	20.3	19.4
Average Annual Earnings	\$ 324.04	\$ 240.72
Percentage Literate	90.3	75.8
Percentage whose Mothers Worked for Wages	7.5	5.6
Percentage who <sup>a</sup> spent childhood on a farm	27.0	75.0
Percentage who <sup>a</sup> spent childhood in a city	46.7	4.0
N	928	1001

<sup>a</sup> These figures are not calculated from the data set used throughout this article. They are calculated from aggregate state figures, which are part of the same government study of textile workers, but which combine data on all children under sixteen years old with data on wage-earning daughters sixteen and over. There were three categories for "Early Childhood Spent": "On Farm," "In Village," and "In City."

Source: Unless otherwise indicated, figures are calculated from U.S. Senate, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States* (GPO, 1910), vol. 1, Cotton Textile Industry, Table XXX, pp. 932-1013.

Table 2.

## Keeping Wages: Did Region Matter?

---

	New England <u>Women</u>	Southern <u>Women</u>
Percentage Who Kept Some Wages	19.8	38.6
Percentage Who Kept Nothing	80.2	61.4
N	928	1001

---

Chi-square (1 d.f.) = 81.18

Source: U.S. Senate, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States* (GPO, 1910), vol. 1, Cotton Textile Industry, Table XXX, pp. 932-1013.

Table 3.

## Wage-Keeping by State

---

	Percentage Who <u>Kept Some Wages</u>	Average Percentage <u>of Wages Kept</u> <sup>a</sup>
<u>South</u>		<u>34.8</u>
North Carolina	44.7 (N=178)	31.6
South Carolina	39.0 (128)	34.5
Georgia	29.1 (80)	42.2
<u>New England</u>		<u>30.7</u>
Maine	24.9 (53)	34.8
Rhode Island	20.5 (84)	28.0
Massachusetts	17.3 (47)	29.7

---

<sup>a</sup> Excluding those who kept nothing.

Standard deviations for average percentage of wages kept ranged from .14 (Rhode Island) to .21 (Georgia).

Source: U.S. Senate, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States* (GPO, 1910), vol. 1, Cotton Textile Industry, Table XXX, pp. 932-1013.

**Table 4. Determinants of Keeping Wages; National and Regional Logit Estimates**  
(Dependent Variable = Keepers: 1 if woman kept some earnings, 0 otherwise)

	<u>South</u>	<u>New Eng.</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>U.S.</u>
Constant	-3.08	-2.62	-3.86	-3.66
(A) Age	.02 (1.19)	.01 (1.11)	.02 (1.90)	.01 (1.62)
(I) Individual Earnings	.001 (1.52)	-.004 (3.79)	-.001 (1.63)	-.001 (1.65)
(W) Weavers	.20 (1.09)	.11 (.48)	.12 (.85)	.18 (1.26)
(F) Family Earnings	.0001 (.54)	.001 (5.92)	.0007 (4.40)	.0008 (4.69)
(Y) Younger Siblings	-.06 (1.58)	-.26 (5.03)	-.14 (4.63)	-.15 (4.95)
(O) Older Siblings	.68 (7.26)	.15 (1.73)	.43 (6.74)	.42 (6.62)
(S) Single Parent	-.27 (1.47)	-.05 (.21)	-.19 (1.35)	-.17 (1.19)
(M) Mom Works for Wages	.34 (1.04)	-.39 (.91)	.06 (.25)	.03 (.12)
(D) Dad in Textiles	.56 (3.36)	-.64 (2.83)	.11 (.89)	
(ND) North Dad in Textiles				-.54 (2.51)
(SD) South Dad in Textiles				.50 (3.12)
(R) South			1.70 (12.10)	1.43 (9.33)
N	1001	928	1929	1929
Percent Correctly Predicted	68.2	82.8	73.4	74.0

t-scores in parentheses

Source: U.S. Senate, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States* (GPO, 1910), vol. 1, Cotton Textile Industry, Table XXX, pp. 932-1013.

**Independent Variables:**

- (A) Age in years.
- (I) Annual earnings of worker, in dollars.
- (W) Dummy for weavers = 1 if weaver, 0 otherwise.
- (F) Annual earnings of woman's family, in dollars.
- (Y) Number of children in home under 16 years of age.
- (O) Number of children in home 16 years or older.
- (S) Dummy for women in single parent households = 1 if lives with single parent, 0 otherwise.
- (M) Dummy for women whose mothers work for wages outside the home = 1 if mother works, 0 otherwise.
- (D) Dummy for women whose fathers work in the textile industry = 1 if in textiles, 0 otherwise.
- (ND) Dummy for northern women whose fathers work in textiles = 1 if yes, 0 otherwise.
- (SD) Dummy for southern women whose fathers work in textiles = 1 if yes, 0 otherwise.
- (R) Dummy designating region in which a woman lives = 1 if Southern, 0 if Northern.



**Table 5. Determinants of Keeping Wages: the New England Model Expanded**

	(A)	(B)
Constant	-2.77	-2.17
(A) Age	.02 (.01)	.008 (.45)
(I) Individual Earnings	-.004 (3.70)	-.004 (3.92)
(W) Weavers	.16 (.69)	.30 (1.22)
(F) Family Earnings	.001 (5.91)	.001 (5.47)
(Y) Younger Siblings	-.27 (5.11)	-.27 (5.06)
(O) Older Siblings	.17 (1.88)	.18 (1.97)
(S) Single Parent	-.10 (.44)	.01 (.04)
(M) Mom Works for Wages	-.42 (.98)	-.35 (.82)
(D) Dad in Textiles	-.69 (3.03)	-.72 (3.08)
(N) Native-born father	.57 (2.08)	
(NI) New Immigrant Group		.32 (.92)
N	928	876
Percent Correctly Predicted	82.8	81.7

t-scores in parentheses

Source: U.S. Senate, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States* (GPO, 1910), vol. 1, Cotton Textile Industry, Table XXX, pp. 932-1013.

**Independent Variables:**

- (A) Age in years.
- (I) Annual earnings of worker, in dollars.
- (W) Dummy for weavers = 1 if weaver, 0 otherwise.
- (F) Annual earnings of woman's family, in dollars.
- (Y) Number of children in home under 16 years of age.
- (O) Number of children in home 16 years or older.
- (S) Dummy for women in single parent households = 1 if lives with single parent, 0 otherwise.
- (M) Dummy for women whose mothers work for wages outside the home = 1 if mother works, 0 otherwise.
- (D) Dummy for women whose fathers work in the textile industry = 1 if in textiles, 0 otherwise.
- (N) Dummy for women whose fathers were native-born Americans = 1 if native born, 0 otherwise.
- (NI) Dummy for women from "new" immigrant groups = 1 if new immigrant, (Italian, Polish, Portuguese), 0 if old immigrant (English, Irish, French Canadian).

**Table 6. Who Kept More?: Ordinary Least-Squares Regression Estimates for Nation and Region**

	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>New Eng.</u>
Constant	-55.65	-42.88	-50.72
(A) Age	1.45 (3.06)	1.14 (1.82)	2.06 (2.83)
(I) Individual Earnings	.33 (12.76)	.36 (10.30)	.27 (7.12)
(W) Weavers	5.96 (1.08)	12.56 (1.88)	-.59 (.05)
(F) Family Earnings	.01 (3.18)	.01 (2.98)	.01 (1.75)
(Y) Younger Siblings	-4.47 (3.58)	-5.07 (3.44)	-3.69 (1.59)
(D) Dad in Textiles		14.65 (2.55)	-8.91 (.92)
(ND) North Dad in Textiles	-13.29 (1.43)		
(SD) South Dad in Textiles	15.28 (2.67)		
(R) South	19.76 (3.29)		
(N) Native			36.46 (3.13)
<hr/>			
N	570	386	184
R <sup>2</sup>	.34	.36	.36

t-scores in parentheses

Source: U.S. Senate, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States* (GPO, 1910), vol. 1, Cotton Textile Industry, Table XXX, pp. 932-1013.

**Independent Variables:**

- (A) Age in years.
- (I) Annual earnings of worker, in dollars.
- (W) Dummy for weavers = 1 if weaver, 0 otherwise.
- (F) Annual earnings of woman's family, in dollars.
- (Y) Number of children in home under 16 years of age.
- (D) Dummy for women whose fathers work in the textile industry = 1 if in textiles, 0 otherwise.
- (ND) Dummy for northern women whose fathers work in textiles = 1 if yes, 0 otherwise.
- (SD) Dummy for southern women whose fathers work in textiles = 1 if yes, 0 otherwise.
- (R) Dummy designating region in which a woman lives = 1 if Southern, 0 if Northern.
- (N) Dummy for women whose fathers were native-born Americans = 1 if native-born, 0 otherwise.

**Table 7. Who Kept More?: Ordinary Least-Squares Regression Estimates for States**

	<u>New Eng.</u>			<u>South</u>		
	<u>ME</u>	<u>MA</u>	<u>RI</u>	<u>NC</u>	<u>SC</u>	<u>GA</u>
One	-7.11	-45.38	-1.20	-33.70	-83.54	-54.89
(A)	.89 (.36)	2.54 (2.62)	2.66 (1.62)	.88 (1.17)	2.39 (1.76)	1.40 (.96)
(I)	.30 (3.27)	.32 (5.12)	.22 (3.64)	.24 (5.29)	.53 (7.84)	.38 (4.93)
(W)	-26.20 (1.46)	-15.06 (.83)	20.70 (1.22)	21.34 (2.31)	8.64 (.75)	-12.14 (.72)
(F)	.006 (.50)	-.006 (.68)	.04 (3.60)	.02 (2.54)	-.003 (.12)	.04 (3.11)
(Y)	-2.43 (.56)	-5.30 (1.26)	4.83 (1.11)	-3.06 (1.53)	-4.26 (1.50)	-4.53 (1.35)
(D)	-10.58 (.51)	2.18 (.12)	-22.54 (1.46)	16.42 (2.12)	11.47 (1.15)	-7.06 (.50)
N	53	84	47	178	128	80
R <sup>2</sup>	.25	.39	.55	.31	.42	.47

t-scores in parentheses

Source: U.S. Senate, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States* (GPO, 1910), vol. 1, Cotton Textile Industry, Table XXX, pp. 932-1013.

**Independent Variables:**

- (A) Age in years.
- (I) Annual earnings of worker, in dollars.
- (W) Dummy for weavers = 1 if weaver, 0 otherwise.
- (F) Annual earnings of woman's family, in dollars.
- (Y) Number of children in home under 16 years of age.
- (D) Dummy for women whose fathers work in the textile industry = 1 if in textiles, 0 otherwise.

One = Constant

## Endnotes

1. Anderson, *Family Structure*; Bodnar, et al., *Lives of Their Own*; Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time*; Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community*; Hall, et al., *Like a Family*; Flammig, *Creating the Modern South*.
2. Shorter, "Female Emancipation," pp. 615-17.
3. Goldin, "Family Strategies"; Goldin and Sokoloff, "Women, Children, and Industrialization"; Cross and Shergold, "The Family Economy"; Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and the Family*; Walkowitz, *Worker, City, Company Town*; Benson, *Counter Cultures*; and see the works cited below in notes 4-7.
4. Evans, *Born for Liberty*, quote on p. 161, and see 156-162, 182-86. Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, analyzes women's work within the framework of family roles. Drawing on Dublin, *Women at Work*, she focuses on the Lowell textile girls of the early nineteenth century and argues that the earliest generation of wage-earning women viewed their work as part of a larger contribution to the new Republic and as a means of preserving their personal independence--both within and without the family. The ideals and economic market which allowed this neat balance tipped when the 1830s economic depression forced women's wages down, and when the middle-class "Domestic Ideology" rendered women's work outside the home as destructive to familial stability and normal childhood development. These new family ideals "forced women to articulate reasons for working and to formalize a sense of jobs as instruments for family survival." As a result, women no longer undertook wage work for "self-realization, ambition, [or] independence." Instead, Kessler-Harris argues, young females came to see remunerative employment as a means of sustaining and perpetuating the domestic ideal. However much working girls' own ambitions clashed with parental objectives, manufacturers, vocational reformers, and male workers, not to mention married women, ultimately helped shape a separate labor market for women, married or not, in which the family, not the job or career, would remain the primary point of focus.
5. Stansell, *City of Women*, quotes on pp. 218, 221.
6. Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, quote on p. 187.

7. Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women*, quotes on pp. 8, 86. In a similar vein, Tilly, "The Family Wage Economy," analyzes the relationship between family and industrial work in a French textile city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. She concludes that households purposefully adapted their behavior to the new urban-industrial environment, and that the result was an increased curtailment of individual autonomy for both wives and children.

Studies of American working women who lived away from home generally make similar arguments. In America's large cities, an increasing number of single females moved away from home to become relatively independent wage earners. These "women adrift," as concerned middle-class progressives called them, often encountered the hard side of urban life--vice, crime, disease, grinding poverty. They also banded together in vibrant networks of companionship and mutual support. Most importantly, according to Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, they took possession of their leisure time, "defied the sexual double standard," and, in so doing, "helped forge the modern sexual expression that replaced Victorian reticence" (p. 141). Cross and Shergold, "The Family Economy," have addressed the issue of women adrift through an econometric analysis of working women in Pennsylvania in 1894. They demonstrate that the likelihood of single women being on their own increased in accordance to their wages and ages, and that women in larger cities lived apart from families more than their small-town counterparts. The more hours a young woman worked, the lower her wages, the younger her age, the more likely she was to remain with her parents. Marketplace forces worked both to push and pull certain women away from their families, and ultimately created both the desire and outlet for greater individual independence. Yet Cross and Shergold note that familial bonds remained strong, and their data show that the majority of single working women in all types of households continued to live with their parents and contribute most of their earnings to the family purse.

8. U.S. Senate, *Report*, demonstrated that the proportion of males in the industry had been increasing, North and South, since the turn of the twentieth century. The reason, the authors concluded, was that the industry was expanding so rapidly the demand for millhands had exceeded the available supply of female workers (see pp. 28-35). Basic works on New England textiles include, Dublin, *Women at Work*; Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism*; Hareven, *Family Time*; Lamphere, *From Working Daughters to Working Mothers*; Prude, *The Coming of Industrial Order*; see also, for the mid-Atlantic states, Walkowitz, *Worker City, Company Town*; and Wallace, *Rockdale*. On southern textiles see, Carlton, *Mill and Town*; Flammig, *Creating the Modern South*; Hall, et al., *Like a Family*; McHugh, *Mill Family*; Newby, *Plain Folk*; and Tullos, *Habits of Industry*.

9. See, U.S. Senate, *Report*, ch. 1; Wright, *Old South, New South*.



10. U.S. Senate, *Report*, ch. 1; Hall, et al., *Like a Family*; Hareven, *Family Time*; McHugh, *Mill Family*.

11. An explanation of the data, followed by the state tables, is in U.S. Senate, *Report*, pp. 932-1013. The published tables include data on the woman's father (race, nativity, years in United States, occupation), on the woman's mother (basic condition: home, work, or dead); on the woman herself (age, occupation, days worked past year, years since beginning work, ability to read and write, and months of school attended); on the household (number of children under 10, number of children 10-13, number of children 14-15, number of children 16 and over, total number of children in home, total wage earners among children at home); on household earnings (earnings of father, earnings of mother, earnings of children under 14, earnings of children 14-15, earnings of children 16 and over, other income, total earnings and income during past year, amount retained by children 16 and over, rent past year, per capital weekly income of family). Throughout I use various terms to refer to the women in the sample--working girls, cotton mill girls, wage-earning daughters, working women, and so on--none of which are intend to be value laden; specifically, I do not intend the term "girl" to be demeaning.

12. The government's estimate for a woman's annual mill income was derived by taking into consideration both her "normal" weekly or bi-weekly wages (as indicated by company records during an unexceptional payroll period) and her own estimates of yearly earnings and days worked. In assessing the reliability of the data for earnings, the federal officials noted: "As a result of this careful questioning [of the woman and of family members], the reports of days worked and earnings were as accurate as it is possible to secure in the absence of detailed records. They are, however, necessarily only approximate, sometimes with a considerable error in the case of the individual, but probably not far from the facts when taken together or in groups of any considerable number" (U.S. Senate, *Report*, p. 933). For more on the probability of error in the data, see *ibid*, pp. 416-18.

13. On the different proportion of earnings contributed to the family income by males and females, see U.S. Senate, *Report*, pp. 436-37. The data in the report does indicate if the working-girl had sisters over sixteen working in the same mill, but in most cases the number of children over sixteen exceeds the number of sisters in the mill; since we have no idea about the gender of the unlisted siblings, the evidence on sisters does not allow for a more precise estimate of *Share*.

14. U.S. Senate, *Report*, p. 352.

15. Lowrance interview.

16. It might be argued that a better regression strategy would be to use all the data for amount of wages kept, rather than to divide the cases into two categories (keepers and nonkeepers) for a logit. We should never eliminate unnecessarily a good deal of useful data, and a standard least-squares model would allow us to ask "who kept how much?", but using a dependent variable with 70 percent zeros involves its own problems. The basic problem seems initially to be that the dependent variable is "censored"; that is, the true value of each zero is censored at some unknown threshold, which, if surpassed, would lead to some dollar amount being kept. If a censorship situation exists, least squares models cannot be trusted. The simple answer to a censorship problem is to use a tobit model. But it might be argued, to the contrary, that no censorship problem actually exists, since zero has a definite meaning for all cases and is, in fact, exactly what we wish to measure. In an earlier pilot study, neither the least squares model or the tobit seemed more appropriate than a logit; see Flamming, "Regression Options for Historians." Also, it seemed to me that "to keep" or "not to keep" was indeed the critical question and that logit therefore offered a cleaner approach to the issue.

17. A dummy variable for *Literacy* was used in many different models and never came close to being statistically significant; it was excluded here simply to trim these already complicated models.

18. The relationship could, of course, run the opposite direction. If daughters saw their working mothers living lives of excessive drudgery--holding full-time jobs outside and inside the home--their commitment to a traditional family structure might have been strengthened, not weakened, by their mother's wage-earning experience. Aldrich, "Determinants of Mortality," demonstrates that wage-earning mothers in the Fall River, Massachusetts, textile industry (1908-1912) had a mortality rate nearly three times that of other local residents and states that "little evidence exists to suggest that married women workers would have been subject to such excess mortality had they remained at home." Hence, a reasonable possibility existed that the relationship between *M* and *Keepers* would be negative. As the logits in this article show, however, there was no significant relationship in either direction.

19. Any coefficient with a t-score of 2 (technically 1.96) is statistically significant at the .05 level or better. Logit models do not assume linearity. As a consequence, the estimated coefficients are not adequate indicators of the relative strength of the relationship; so, unlike least-squares coefficients, logit coefficients do not have predictive properties. The key to interpreting logit results lies not in the coefficients but in the statistical significance of the variables; we are interested here in identifying the cluster of factors that determined wage-keeping patterns. There is no readily acceptable means for comparing the relative magnitude of the significant variables in a logit model.

20. Age and work experience were found to be very highly correlated.

21. The data used here, table 30 from volume 1 of the Senate report, does not include religion; it only provides nativity and ethnicity for the daughter's fathers. Among the New Englanders, 82 percent of the sample could be classified, by way of ethnicity, as nominally Catholic. Jewish immigrants did not normally gravitate into cotton mill work (the main exception being the Jewish silk mill workers in Paterson, New Jersey) although Jews were a commercial presence in many Catholic mill communities. On the relationship between ethnicity and religion among New England mill workers in the early twentieth century, see Lamphere, *Working Daughters*, ch. 2; Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism*, chs. 1-2; and Goldberg, *A Tale of Three Cities* pp. 26-31, 49-55, 86-90;

Among southerners, 99.8 were daughters of native-born Americans, or, more accurately, native-born southerners, since it was almost unheard of for Yankees to move South on textile work in Dixie's low-wage mills. Most southern millhands were Baptists of one brand or another, and the others were Methodists or Holiness, with perhaps a very few Presbyterians; I have never heard of a Catholic or Jewish cotton mill worker in the South. See Hall, et al., *Like a Family*; Flammig, *Creating the Modern South*; Newby, *Plain Folk*; Pope, *Millhands and Preachers*; and Tullos, *Habits of Industry*.

22. Goldberg, *A Tale of Three Cities*, p. 90.

23. Using ethnicity as a proxy for religion, I ran regressions with a dummy variable designating Catholic women. The variable proved statistically insignificant in every model, but the measurement was too untrustworthy to count for much. I counted as Catholic those women whose fathers were French Canadian (54 percent of all northerners), Irish (16 percent), Portuguese (7 percent), Italian (3 percent), and Polish (2 percent). English immigrants (9 percent) could be considered Protestant. There were a scattering of fathers who were not part of any major ethnic group in the New England mills (6 percent); these cases were, by turns, put into the model as "non-Catholics" and left out of the equation as "missing data," with no change in the significance of the dummy for Catholics. The real problem, however, was those women whose fathers were listed as "American" (5 percent). These men could have been Yankee Protestants or, perhaps more likely, third generation Irish, who almost certainly would have been Catholic; and there is no way to disentangle these two groups of "Americans" in the model.

24. I excluded the variable for older siblings because it was highly correlated with *F*, and I excluded the dummy variables for single parents and working mothers, in an effort to simplify the analysis, after both variables proved consistently insignificant and ineffective in model after model.

25. Flammig, *Creating the Modern South*; Hall, "Disorderly Women"; Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied*.
26. Thompson interview.

## References

- Aldrich, Mark, "Determinants of Mortality Among New England Cotton Mill Workers During the Progressive Era" *Journal of Economic History* 42 (December 1982): 847-63.
- Alter, George, *Family and the Female Life Course: The Women of Verviers, Belgium, 1849-1880* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
- Anderson, Michael, *Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
- Benson, Susan Porter, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1917* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986).
- Bodnar, John, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).
- Carlton, David L., *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University State Press, 1982).
- Cross, Gary, and Peter R. Shergold, "The Family Economy and the Market: Wages and Residence of Pennsylvania Women in the 1890s" *Journal of Family History* 11 (1986): 245-65.
- Dublin, Thomas, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).
- Evans, Sara, *Born for Liberty: A History of American Women* (New York: The Free Press, 1989).
- Flamming, Douglas, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884-1984* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming, January 1993).
- Flamming, Douglas, "Regression Options for Historians: Choosing Among OLS, Tobit, Logit and Probit Models" (California Institute of Technology, Humanities Working Paper, 1992).
- Gerstle, Gary, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- Goldberg, David J., *A Tale of Three Cities: Labor Organization and Protest in Paterson, Passaic, and Lawrence, 1916-1921* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989).
- Goldin, Claudia, "Family Strategies and the Family Economy in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Role of Secondary Workers" in Theodore Hershberg, ed., *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group Experience in the 19th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
- Goldin, Claudia, "The Work and Wages of Single Women," *Journal of Economic History* 40 (1980): 81-88.

Goldin, Claudia, and Kenneth Sokoloff, "Women, Children, and Industrialization in the Early Republic: Evidence from the Manufacturing Censuses," *Journal of Economic History* 42 (1982): 741-774.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South" *Journal of American History* 73 (September 1986): 354-82.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly, *Like A Family: The Making a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between the Family and Work in a New England Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Janiewski, Dolores E. *Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).

Kessler-Harris, Alice, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

Lamphere, Louise, *From Working Daughters to Working Mothers: Immigrant Women in a New England Industrial Community* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

Lowrance, Patricia, interview with Douglas Flamming, Dalton, Georgia, 30 July 1985, Crown Gardens and Archives, Dalton, Georgia.

McHugh, Cathy L., *Mill Family: The Labor System in the Southern Cotton Textile Industry, 1880-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Meyerowitz, Joanne J., *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1988).

Newby, I. A., *Plain Folk of the New South: Social Change and Cultural Persistence, 1880-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

Peiss, Kathy, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

Pope, Liston, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942).

Prude, Jonathan, *The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Sokoloff, Kenneth, and Claudia Goldin, [Need title and citation] "Early Industrialization of New England" *Journal of Economic History*.

Stansell, Christine, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1869* (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1986).

Tentler, Leslie Woodcock, *Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Thompson, Marselle, taped interview with Douglas Flammig, Dalton, Georgia, 11 July 1985, Crown Gardens and Archives, Dalton, Georgia.

Tilly, Louise A., "The Family Wage Economy of a French Textile City: Roubaix, 1872-1906" *Journal of Family History* 4 (1979): 381-92.

Tilly, Louise A., and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work, and the Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1978).

Tullos, Allen, *Habits of Industry: White Culture and the Transformation of the Carolina Piedmont* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

U.S. Senate, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States*, vol. 1, Cotton Textile Industry (Washington: GPO, 1910).

Walkowitz, Daniel K., *Worker, City, Company Town: Iron and Cotton Worker Protests in Troy and Cohoes, New York, 1855-84* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

Wallace, Anthony F. C., *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978).

Wright, Gavin, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

Yans-McLaughlin, Virginia, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977).